



San Diego City Attorney **MICHAEL J. AGUIRRE**

NEWS RELEASE

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ALBERTSONS PAYS \$2 MILLION TO SETTLE CONSUMER PROTECTION PROSECUTION ALLEGING UNFAIR BUSINESS PRACTICES

San Diego, CA: The San Diego City Attorney's Office, along with the District Attorneys of Monterey, Solano and Napa Counties, settled a \$2,000,000 settlement in a civil consumer protection case against Albertsons Inc., which operates the California grocery chain under the same name. The City Attorney and district attorneys had alleged that Albertsons failed to subtract the weight of certain packaging when charging customers for deli products such as salads and bulk food items such as coffee and candy. In addition, Albertsons failed to properly remove excessive ice from seafood.

"This conduct resulted in consumers paying more money than they should have in violation of California law," said City Attorney Michael Aguirre.

Although based in Idaho, Albertsons has over 400 stores in California and over 2500 retail stores nationwide. The case was based upon investigations conducted by the Division of Measurement Standards in the California Department of Food and Agriculture, and 42 county Agriculture Commissioners/Sealers and county Weights and Measure Departments, including the San Diego County Department of Weights and Measures.

According to Deputy City Attorney Steven Gold of the Consumer & Environmental Protection Unit in the Criminal Division of the San Diego City Attorney's Office, inspectors also discovered that Albertson's shelf price tags did not always represent what consumers were being charged at the register. In some instances, a shelf tag would falsely advertise that a product was "on-sale." However when the consumer went to pay for the item, the full price was charged.

Without admitting any wrongdoing, Albertsons agreed to a final judgment which required that they pay a total of \$2,000,000 in civil penalties, restitution and costs. Since it was impossible to identify how much loss each consumer suffered, \$300,000 of the settlement will be provided to various consumer protection agencies for training and equipment to investigate such cases. In addition, Albertsons Inc. is enjoined from committing these violations in the future.

Consumers should also be aware that Albertsons has a program in place that provides the customer an item free of charge, if the customer points out that the price he or she is being charged at the register is different than the advertised shelf price. Consumers should always note the price stated on the shelf and compare that to the price charged at the register.

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